

DRIFT TOWARD DICTATORSHIP

Mr. THOMAS of Oklahoma presented the following

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Do the American people desire a dictatorial form of government? Certainly not. To-day the President of the United States has greater power than any ruler in the history of the world because of the great virility of our people, and enormous resources and wealth of our country, and the governmental powers now centralized in him.

No such thing as a superman ever has or ever will exist.

It is axiomatic that the operation of centralized power in an individual or in a commission consisting of a few individuals can only be commensurate with the integrity, ability, and experience of the few in which said power is centralized.

To-day a President of the United States directly or indirectly controls the air, the earth, and the waters of our country because of his appointing power of our numerous commissions and the resultant accountability of the appointees to him. He may direct the Radio Commission controlling air transmission; the policies of the Interstate Commerce Commission controlling our transportation; the banking and financial interests of our country through the Federal Reserve Board; the manufacturing interests of our country through the Tariff Commission and the Federal Trade Commission; the shipping of our country through the Shipping Board; and he practically controls Government expenditures and congressional appropriations through the Director of the Budget.

His influence indirectly affects the press of the country because of fears of possible discrimination under second-class postage and the disinclination of the gentlemen of the fourth estate to be "non persona grata" at the White House.

THE VETO POWER

The framers of the Constitution delegated the veto prerogative to the Nation's Chief Executive simply for the purpose of enabling him to exercise the power on constitutional grounds and not with the intention of delegating to an individual the power to set aside by a stroke of the pen the wishes of nearly two-thirds of the Nation as represented in the legislative branch of our Government. This power was an outgrowth of the English monarchical government, which, though the Crown has had the veto prerogative, has never been exercised on legislation during the past 140 years.

Our forefathers could not have realized the possible danger of the power they were delegating to an individual in their constitutional provision of the veto power and the coincident two-thirds requirement. They, doubtless, judged that the public men of the Nation in the future would be actuated by the same unselfish and patriotic motives that influenced them in their proclamation of our national independence and their solicitude for the public welfare. Their rugged, honest minds had no conception of the degenerative motives that ambition and selfishness might ultimately inculcate in the minds of some of our public men. They, doubtless, never thought of the possibility in the hoped-for many centuries of life that our Nation might endure that any temporary occupant of the White House could consider his own interests and self-perpetuation rather than an improvement in the welfare of our country as a whole.

Unless this power be diminished the time may come when our National Capital and the White House may degenerate into the clearing house for selfish interests and rewards for chicanery, debauchery, and subsidy, a result that even our forefathers, brainy as they were, could hardly foresee. In my humble opinion our Government would be in a far stronger position if the presidential veto power were limited so that a majority of both Houses instead of two-thirds could override a presidential veto. I realize that it would probably take several decades before a constitutional amendment would be enacted to bring about this change in our form of government.

The desirability or undesirability of such a change would be echinated in the public mind and public opinion rapidly crystallized should any party go to the people with a plank in its platform advocating the presidential nonusage of the veto power except on constitutional grounds or should any candidate for the Presidency announce that if elected he would never exercise the veto power except on constitutional grounds.

These thoughts are not intentional criticisms of any individual but existing instrumentalities and methods which, if unchecked may sometimes be of the greatest menace to our country. Issues are all important; individuals are but incidents to same. Issues if sound and demonstratable will be adopted and the political success of the individuals will be because of their identification with the principles rather than their political acumen or personal popularity.